

A
R E V I E W
Of our Present
TESTS and SUBSCRIPTIONS,
In all Humility subscribed to the
CONSIDERATION
Of the Two Houses of
PARLIAMENT.



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MANUSCRIPTS
OF THE
SUBSCRIPTION OF
ENGLISH HISTORICAL TRACTS

THE HISTORY OF THE

CONSTITUTION OF THE

PARLIAMENT

OF GREAT BRITAIN

AND OF IRELAND

FROM THE FIRST

TO THE PRESENT

STATE

OF THE

CONSTITUTION



THE P R E F A C E.



IN Matters of an indifferent Nature, a peaceable Submission and Obedience to the Commands and Injunctions of our Governors, as well in Church as State, is our Duty as Subjects, because the contrary Practice might be a Means of introducing much Disorder and Confusion:

BUT if Obedience to such Command or Injunction, tends to the Breach of, or interferes with our Duty towards GOD, (which is not an impossible

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possible

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possible Supposition) then most assuredly it can never be our Duty, since it can never be made a doubt whether we ought not to obey God, rather than Man.

O B E D I E N C E to such Command or Injunction, is a Breach of, and doth interfere with our Duty towards God, if by such Command or Injunction, we are required to subscribe or declare our Assent to any Doctrine, which arraigns or calls in Question the Justice or Goodness of the Most High God, because the sure belief of these, is the Foundation of all Religion; these are our Comfort and Support in this Life, and on these depend our hopes of an happy Immortality; remove this Belief, and if any Notion of a God remains, it is such as must deprive us of all the Comforts of Religion, or sink us into the lowest depth of Despair.

T H A T

The P R E F A C E. V

THAT Doctrine arraigns or calls in question the Justice and Goodness of the Most High God, which teaches us to believe that he will punish everlastingly poor Creatures, for not doing those things which they have no Power to do.

IT is not in our Power to chuse what we will believe, because belief is an Act of the Understanding, and arises from the Perception of the Reasons offered to induce it, consequently to believe without having or perceiving any Reason sufficient to induce a Belief, is impossible, and all pretence to it mere Delusion or Hypocrisy.

'Tis true the Temptations and Pleasures of the World, and our own Prejudices and Prepossessions, may, and often do interpose and hinder our serious Attention to Truth, and which
therefore

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therefore ought to be guarded against with the utmost Care, and the strictest Attention and Impartiality, with an humble and due Sense of our own Weakness, is necessary in our searches after Truth.

BUT when this is done, if we are still in the dark, it may be our Misfortune, but will not be imputed to us a Sin, because we have done all in our Power to do: Neither will the Belief or Disbelief, consequent to such inquiry, be Matter of Choice, but become necessary to the Understanding in the same manner, as the Perception of Light and Colours is to an Eye rightly directed.

IF therefore to believe, without having or perceiving any reason sufficient to induce a Belief is impossible, then to punish an humble, diligent and impartial Inquirer after Truth, for doubting where he wants Reason
sufficient

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sufficient to induce his Belief, or wants Understanding to apprehend the Prevalency of such Reasons as are offered to convince him, is equally just as to punish a Man for not seeing, who wants Eyes to see.

SURELY it becomes us seriously to consider this before we presume to say, Whosoever doth not Believe in our Creeds, or as we are taught to believe, shall without doubt Perish Everlastingly; least we expressly violate the Command of our Saviour and Judge, who hath taught us to condemn not, that we be not condemned, and least we arraign or call in Question the Justice and Goodness of the great God, and represent him under such a Character as I dread to name.

AND if subscribing to this Doctrine, is enjoined the Clergy as a previous and necessary Qualification for their acceptance of any Preferment in the Church

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Church, it would better become us all, with one Heart and Mind, to make our humble Application to the Wisdom of the Legislature, for the Repeal of such Injunction, instead of that uncharitable Attachment to Tests and Impositions, which so much Prevails.





A
D E F E N C E
O F
CHRISTIANITY:
O R,

An Answer to a Pamphlet, Intituled, *The
Athanasian Creed, a Preservative against
Heresies.*

*Canst thou by Searching find out GOD? Canst thou
find out the ALMIGHTY to Perfection? Job.
c. xi. v. 7.*



W H E N that weak-reasoning
Reptile, sinful Man, pre-
sumes to examine and search
out the Nature and Essence of
that GOD who made him, he will soon

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be sensible, that he is engaged in a Subject vastly out of his Depth.

To contemplate the Power, Wisdom and Goodness of our ALMIGHTY CREATOR is most pleasing to the Imagination, and is probably Part of the Happiness of a future State: For, how is the Mind fill'd with a most delightful Astonishment when we cast our Eyes towards the vast Expanse of Heaven, and view there that numberless, radiant Host of Stars, that are shining round us; when we consider that glorious Body, the Sun, with that Chorus of Planets moving round him in their several Orbits, and performing their Periods with a most surprizing Exactness; when we turn our Eyes even to this our Earth, what Scope is there for Admiration; what a beautiful Order of Things present themselves to our View; what Variety do we there find of Animals, Plants, Minerals, &c. When we reflect upon our own Make, upon
on

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on the curious Structure of our Bodies, and the more amazing Frame of the Soul, and its Union with the Body; when we consider ourselves as Beings, just call'd from Nothing, to continue for ever in a happy Eternity, as our most blessed Religion assures us, unless we forfeit it thro' our own Wickedness; such Reflections as these will fill our Minds with a most pleasing Rapture, and make our Hearts burn with Gratitude towards our most merciful and gracious CREATOR!

BUT, if not content with adoring the great MAJESTY of Heaven and Earth, and in admiring the Works of his Hands, and in imitating his moral Perfections, we take upon ourselves to explain his inimitable Attributes, and to measure the ALMIGHTY by our narrow Conceptions, we shall run into dangerous Errors. Hence it is, that rash and inquisitive Men perplex themselves and others about
God's

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GOD'S Fore-knowledge, and Man's Free-will; and because they themselves cannot attend to many different Objects at the same Time, they are too forward to think it impossible even for the Great GOD himself, at one View, to look through all the vast Immenfity of Nature, past, present, and to come.

AGAIN, because we can have no other Idea of any Kind of Duration, but that by which we ourselves, and all created Beings do exist; we are confounded and contradict ourselves when we measure Eternity by any Notion which we can frame of it. The Existence of the Sovereign Author of Nature, who is and hath been from Eternity, not being to be measured by our shallow Notions of Existence. One great Mischief attending such unwarrantable Enquiry is this, That whilst Men are losing themselves in searching after what they can never discover, they frequently

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quently neglect, and sometimes contradict the moral Attributes of the Great God, none of which seem to have suffered more from the Explanations of Men, than that of his infinite Goodness, that glorious Attribute which shines so eminently throughout all his Works, and which, if it may be allowed to us poor Mortals to speak thus of the Attributes of the most High God, seems to be his Favourite, above all the rest, and which is so wonderfully display'd in the Redemption of Mankind; that the Son of God should leave the Bosom of his Father and become Man; that he should pass a Life full of Want and Misery, and at last die on the Cross, that we might live, and Mankind be restored to Favour, is a Transaction the most wonderful and amazing! But even this Transaction most wonderful, this Goodness immense, this eminent Instance of Mercy towards the Sons of Men, thro' an over-forward Zeal, and vehement
Passion

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Passion of some Persons for their own Explications and Notions, hath been most egregiously misrepresented and traduced, and Men have even dared to arraign the infinite Goodness of the Great God, and to advance and even impose such Doctrines, as would strike a Heavener with Amazement at their Presumption, whilst they seem to forget this certain Truth, that an adequate Idea of the supreme God is so infinitely above our Capacities, that Angels and Archangels are only capable of adoring Him; what He is, is known to Himself alone.

CAN it be supposed that the Design of our SAVIOUR in descending from Heaven was to gratify Men's idle Curiosities, and to amuse us with the Speculations of Things above our Capacities? The Devil, indeed, tempted our first Parents with a vast Increase of Knowledge, if they would eat the forbidden Fruit. *Gen. ch. iii.*

ver.

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ver. 5. *In the Day ye eat thereof your Eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as GODS, knowing Good and Evil.* Or will any one say, that the Doctrines of Christianity were calculated meerly for a Trial of our Credulity, without having an immediate Relation to our Practice? No, 'tis the most pious Man, and not the most knowing, who is the best Christian. *Knowledge puffeth up; Charity edifieth,* 1 Cor. ch. viii. ver. 1. *Tho' I understand all Mysteries and all Knowledge, and tho' I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing,* 1 Cor. ch. xiii. ver. 2. It is indeed a Sin of a very heinous Nature, if such a Sin could possibly be committed, to believe, that any Thing is reveal'd by GOD, and yet to doubt if it is true: I say, if such a Sin could possibly be committed; for, can any Person harbour so profane a Thought of the Great and Mighty GOD of Heaven and Earth as to suppose, that he is a Liar, and a De-

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ceiver

IO . Y . A DEFENCE of

ceiver of his poor Creatures? The Devil, we are told, was a Liar from the Beginning; but GOD forbid that any Person should dare to entertain such a Thought of the GOD of Truth. I think those, who rigidly impose Articles of Faith under the Penalty of eternal Damnation, would do well to consider, whether their presuming to determine, that the merciful and gracious GOD will eternally punish a Creature for differing in Judgment from the Imposers, is not as great an Affront to the Goodness of GOD, as any Unbelief can be to his Fidelity. How dare any Man entertain such a Thought of perfect Goodness! *of that GOD who is the Father of Mercies and GOD of all Comfort, 2 Cor. ch. i. ver. 3. of that GOD who is loving unto every Man, and whose Mercy is over all his Works, Psal. cxlv. ver. 9.*

BUT, though it is a most grievous Sin to deny the Truth of any Thing,
that

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that GOD hath been pleased clearly to reveal to us, yet it doth not from hence follow, that it is equally sinful to doubt whether such a Thing be revealed by GOD, tho' reputed Saints have asserted it, and Councils confirm'd it; or to doubt whether the Church may not be mistaken; to say That, is to affirm, that the Infallibility of Men is equal to the Infallibility of GOD. I confess, what Men eminent for Learning and Piety have in successive Ages seemed to acquiesce in, what the Divines of our own Church (and for whom I have the greatest Regard) have subscribed their Assent to the Belief of, and what the Wisdom of the Legislature have thought proper to enjoin, is of that Weight, that tho' it cannot over-rule my private Judgment, and force me to believe That to be agreeable to Scripture, which, from an impartial Inquiry, I am firmly persuaded is repugnant thereto; yet, from a true Sense of my own Weakness, I durst not undertake to be a Teacher or In-

structor of others in a Matter of that Importance; and was determin'd not to suffer my private Opinion to raise Disputes, till I found not only the wisest of the Laity, but even the best and most honest among the Clergy, wishing we were once fairly rid of this Creed: And a Book being just published, Intituled, *The Athanasian Creed, a Preservative against Heresies*; and undertaking to shew the Reasonableness and even Necessity of retaining it in the publick Liturgy, I hope it will not be amiss in me to examine this Performance, and to wish, with those great Men, we were fairly rid of it; and that the Consciences of the Clergy and Laity were no longer entangled with a Creed, which, at least, they must hope may not be true, since it makes the Terms of Salvation exceeding difficult.

THIS Treatise appears to be the Performance of a masterly Hand, and the Work of a Gentleman well skill'd

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skill'd in Ecclesiastical, Critical History. He acquaints us, in the first Place, with the Original of this Creed; admits, that it hath been ascribed, by learned Men, to different Authors; as also, that there is no better Agreement amongst them, as to the Time when it was compos'd, but says, that 'tis the Opinion of the judicious and learned Dr. *Waterland*, that it was compos'd in *Gaul*, by one *Hilary*, Abbot of *Lerins*, and afterwards Bishop of *Arles*, about the Year 430. I will not much dispute this Matter with him, though other Authors of great Note affirm, that it was never heard of before the eighth Century, but only shall observe, that it is by all Hands agreed to be a spurious Offspring, and not the Creed of *Athanasius*, but introduc'd into the World under the Sanction of his Name, a very great Number of Years after he was dead, in the dark Ages of the World, when Men were not very curious about
what

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what was Genuine and what was Spurious.

THE Author of that Essay, then launches out into high Encomiums upon the *Athanasian* Creed; calls it the great Bulwark of our Faith; a standing Fence and Preservative against the Wiles and Equivocations of Hereticks; admits, that it hath been the Occasion of much Strife and Dispute amongst Christians, but which, he says will always be the Case, as long as Hereticks are reckon'd in the Number of Christians; but says, That is no Reason for laying it aside, for, Orthodoxy ought not to give Way to Heresy: Then he offers this equitable Proposition; if the Doctrine contained in the *Athanasian* Creed be false or unwarrantable by Scripture, away with the Creed; but if it be true and important, then its having been the Occasion of Disputes is no Reason for giving it up. After so fair a Proposition, I expected
some

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some Show of Argument to prove the Doctrine contained in the *Athanasian* Creed to be true, important and warranted by Scripture: But he entirely evades the Question, and appeals to the Works of the learned and judicious Doctor *Waterland*, who, he informs us, “ hath so fully proved
“ it against all the Arts and Arguments that could be invented, that
“ we are not at this time of Day to
“ begin anew, and set forth our Title. If Men will be still so impatient as to bring up again, and
“ endeavour to put-off to the Publick all the stale and old Arguments,
“ which have been confuted over and over, it is unreasonable to expect,
“ that the Church should be obliged to attend them and confute them,
“ as often as they please to be confuted. He also cites, *Mark*, c. xvi. v. 16.
“ to prove the damning Clauses agreeable to Scripture”.

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FAR be it from me to endeavour to impeach any Article of the Church, which doth not evidently call in Question the Goodness of God. Dr. *Waterland* and others may go on undisturb'd by me in entangling themselves in their Illustrations, as this Author is pleas'd to phrase it, p. 53, &c. of the *Doctrine of the Trinity*. I am very well assured, that the Divine Essence is infinitely above our Conceptions, and that what He hath been pleas'd to reveal to us, 'tis our Duty to believe, though our shallow Reason can't comprehend it: But when Men, or the Church not satisfy'd with the Expressions under which it is reveal'd, or acquiescing in the Words of Scripture, will be drawing up Creeds, and take upon themselves to explain, interpret or illustrate, it is no Sin to doubt of such Explanation, Interpretation or Illustration, unless it be a Sin to doubt of the

Infallibility

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Infallibility of the Church, and if it be not a Sin, then a God of infinite Goodness will not condemn us for it.

SUFFER me, Reader, to beg of you to represent before your Eyes a most awful Scene, the general Judgment of the World, and a pious and devout Christian, whose earthly Life had been always free from the Infection of enormous and presumptuous Sins, presenting himself at the Throne of Grace, and petitioning for Mercy and Pardon, not relying on his own Goodness, but on the Merits of his SAVIOUR. Can you believe the Judge of the World will make him this severe Answer? Since you have not believed the Catholick Faith, as it is illustrated in the *Athanasian Creed*, you shall perish everlastingly. How can we reconcile such a Sentence with the Goodness and Mercy of God!

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ESPECIALLY, if we consider the *Athanasian Creed*, which surely, I may be allowed to say, contains many Things of hard Digestion: A Creed which rather obscures than illustrates the Sense of Scripture. To assert this to be the Christian Doctrine is to suggest very hard Things of Christianity: But surely nothing can be more contradictory, not only to natural, but also to reveal'd Religion, than the damning Clauses of the *Athanasian Creed*, which I will endeavour to shew from several Considerations: And first, from the seeming Contrariety between those Clauses and the fundamental Articles of Christianity.

I. THE Fundamental Article of Christianity is, That CHRIST JESUS came into the World to redeem and save Mankind. Hear our SAVIOUR's own Words; *John, ch. iii. ver. 16, 17. GOD so loved the World, that he gave his onely begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting*

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everlasting Life; for GOD sent not his Son into the World, to condemn the World, but that the World through him might be saved. Hear also, what St. Paul says, *I Tim. ch. i. ver. 15. This is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, That JESUS CHRIST came into the World to save Sinners.* So if we turn our Eyes to those Passages of the *New Testament*, which speak of the last Judgment, we find the Enquiry at that Time will be about Works, not Catholick Faith, not Orthodoxy. 'Tis not, *depart from me ye Hereticks, but depart from me ye Wicked into everlasting Fire:* And surely, we must allow, that our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, who is appointed by GOD to be the Judge of the Quick and the Dead, knows the Proceedings of that Day much better, than the Abbot of *Lerins*, or supposed Author of the *Athanasian Creed*. And as for those Persons who value themselves upon their Orthodoxy, let them hear our SAVIOUR's Words, *Matthew, ch. vii. ver. 21, 22, 23. Not every one that*

saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven. Many will say to me in that Day, LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name cast out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works; and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work Iniquity.

How very different from all this is the *Athanasian Creed*? *Whosoever will be saved before all Things* (before good Works) *it is necessary that he hold the Catholick Faith, which Faith except every one* (without Exception) *do keep whole* (that is all and every Part of it) *and undefiled, without doubt, he shall perish everlastingly: (A most positive and dreadful Denunciation!)* Then after attempting to explain the Doctrine of the Trinity, it adds, *He that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.* (And again at the Conclusion of the Creed) *This is the Catho-*

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Catholick Faith, which except a Man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

I AM very averse to add to the Number of Disputants about the Article of the Church relating to a Trinity in Unity, a Subject far too deep for human Reason to fathom: However, thus much, Truth obliges me to say, that in Scripture we read of many figurative or allegorical Expressions, sometimes more particularly applicable to the Age or Genius of the Persons to whom such Discourse was more immediately directed, and sometimes adapted to the Weakness of the Understanding of Mankind in general; for, whilst the Soul is here entombed within its Tabernacle of organized Clay, it receives the Foundation of all its Knowledge from certain Impressions made upon the Nerves by external Objects. Thus by the Eye we can discern nothing but what is material, and even so gross as to reflect Light, and thereby to convey to the Eye the Shapes and Colours

Colours of Things, and yet the Sight is the noblest of all our Senses: Hence it appears, that we can no more conceive an adequate Idea of the Nature of a spiritual Substance, than a Man who is born blind can of Light and Colours: But for Persons, who arrogantly assume to themselves the Title of Free-Thinkers, to argue from hence, that there is no such Thing as a spiritual Substance, is more absurd, than for a Man born blind to argue that there is no such Thing as Light and Colours, because the poor blind Man hath only the concurrent Testimony of others to convince him; whereas the Free-thinker hath his own Soul to be a Witness against him, an immaterial thinking Substance within him, which though it receives its first Notices of Things from without, yet it hath a Power of abstracting, comparing, multiplying, or dividing Objects offered to it through the Senses, and from such small Beginnings, by
this

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this its Faculty of reasoning, arrives at many and great Truths.

IN Compliance to this Defect of our Understanding the Scripture represents Things to us under figurative Expressions. Thus we read in Scripture of the Blessed in Heaven sitting on Thrones and possessing Crowns and Kingdoms, such Things being most likely to affect us here; but the true Joys of Heaven are not such mean Things as these, but such Things as Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive: And as the Things of another Life are beyond our Conception, much more the great Author of all Things; therefore, though we often find in Scripture such Expressions as these, *With thy own Right-hand and thy holy Arm hast Thou gotten Thy self the Victory; in Thy Book were all my Members written, which Day by Day were fashioned,* when as yet there was none of them; yet

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yet surely, no one ever entertained so gross an Idea of the ALMIGHTY, as to suppose he was fashioned like a Man with Eyes, Hands and Arms like unto one of us; or that he was employed as a Secretary in noting down in a Book the Transactions here below.

BUT one of the most remarkable Expressions of this Kind is, *Matthew, ch. xxvi. ver. 26, 27, 28. JESUS took Bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the Disciples, and said take eat, This is my Body; and he took the Cup and gave Thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it, for This is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the Remission of Sins. So, John, ch. vi. ver. 53, 54, 55, 56. Verily, verily, I say unto You, except Ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, Ye have no Life in You: Whoso eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood hath eternal Life, and I will raise him up at*
the

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the last Day, for my Flesh is Meat indeed, and my Blood is Drink indeed, he that eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood dwelleth in me, and I in him. But yet our Church doth not suppose, or require us to believe, that in the Sacrament of the LORD'S Supper the Bread and Wine is actually transubstantiated into Flesh and Blood, into the very Body and Blood of CHRIST, but understands these Words only in a figurative Sense, *viz.* As our Bodies are strengthened and refreshed by the Bread and Wine, so are our Souls strengthened and refreshed by the faithful receiving of the Sacrament of the LORD'S Supper. Again, our SAVIOUR, *John, ch. x. ver. 30.* speaks thus of Himself, *I and my Father are One.* And *John, ch. xiv. ver. 10, 11.* speaking to Philip, thus expresseth Himself, *Believest thou not, that I am in the FATHER, and the FATHER in me; the Words that I speak unto you, I speak not of my self, but the FATHER that dwelleth in me, he doth*

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the Works: Believe me, that I am in the FATHER, and the FATHER in me. After he had ended his Discourse, and which was the last He made to his Disciples before his Crucifixion, He concludes all in a Prayer to GOD for their Preservation. John, ch. xvii. ver. 11. Holy FATHER keep through thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be One, as We are. And ver. 20, 21, 22, 23. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, which shall believe on Me thro' their Word, that they all may be One, as Thou FATHER art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be One in Us, that the World may believe, that Thou hast sent Me; and the Glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them, that they may be One, even as We are One, I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in One, and that the World may know that Thou hast sent Me. Which being our SAVIOUR'S own Words, and spoken at the same Time, are a much better and

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and plainer Comment upon the precedent Words, than whole Volumes of the Works of St. *Athanasius*, St. *Hilary*, or any other Saint, ancient or modern.

BUT admitting not only the Article it self, but every Illustration of it (as 'tis called) in the *Athanasian Creed*, to be true, yet I shall endeavour to prove from these further following Considerations, that the damning Clauses contained in that Creed are so far from being agreeable to Scripture, that they are repugnant thereto, and consequently the imposing them upon the Clergy as their real Belief, is a cruel and unwarrantable Imposition, tending to Hypocrisy and Infidelity.

2. HAD a true and faithful Belief of the Doctrine contained in the *Athanasian Creed* been absolutely necessary to Salvation; had any Doubt or Mistake therein been of that dreadful Importance, our blessed SAVIOUR Himself

would most certainly have instructed us in the same, as far as our Nature was capable of apprehending it, and informed us of our Danger. He, who composed a Prayer for the Use of his Disciples, would most assuredly have composed also a Creed for their Benefit, if any Deviation from the true Faith had been of that fatal Consequence. To say otherwise, is either to say he could not, or he would not: The first supposes the Son of God, notwithstanding his declaring Himself to be *the Way, the Truth and the Life*, not able to instruct us in the true Way to eternal Life, so well as an Abbot of *Lerins*; the other, if possible, is worse, for, that supposes Him to forget the Business he came to finish, *viz.* to save Mankind, and to instruct us in all Things necessary for our Belief and Practice. 'Tis not sufficient, that this Author himself, and his learned Friend can, by the Acuteness of their great Understandings, deduce the several Articles of the *Athanasian*

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anasian Creed from Scripture, for since the blessed JESUS died upon the Cross to redeem all Mankind, the Terms of Salvation ought to be obvious to all, to the meanest Capacities, to every One, who hath a Soul to be saved.

3. NEITHER have the Apostles of our Saviour instructed us in the Articles of the *Athanasian Creed*: So far were they from instructing us, that it appears they themselves were not acquainted with the Phrase of THREE PERSONS and ONE GOD, as appears by an unexceptionable Authority, this Author himself, who, p. 49, thus informs us: “ When *Sabellius Praxeas* and *Noetus* rais’d Disputes against the Church of CHRIST, and charged the Catholicks with THREE Gods, the Terms; Persons and Substance came into Use, and the Distinction was expressed by Persons, and the Unity by Substance; and the Answer of the Catholicks was, that they did not
“ profess

“ profess TWO GODS, or THREE GODS,
“ but ONE GOD and TWO PERSONS,
“ or THREE PERSONS:” And yet afterwards, p. 75, “ He acknowledges
“ that if an Angel from Heaven
“ preach any Doctrine to us, which
“ was not preached by CHRIST and
“ his Apostles, we ought to reject
“ it.” But it must be remembered,
that though the very Words of
TRINITY in UNITY, or THREE PERSONS
and ONE GOD are not to be
found in Scripture, yet we are assured
by the Divines of our Church,
that this Doctrine is the plain and obvious
Meaning of Sacred Writ, and
that there are many Texts in Scripture,
which necessarily prove it, and which
can’t, without the utmost Violence,
be interpreted in any other Sense: And
be it so, I will much sooner admit
not only that Article, but the further
Explanations thereof in the *Athanasian Creed*,
than presume to engage in a
Dispute about the Divine Essence, who
is unsearchable: What I contend for
is,

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is, that though every individual Article of the *Athanasian Creed* be true, yet to say, every one, without doubt, shall perish Everlastingly, who doth not believe it, is repugnant to Scripture; because it can't be thought, but that if the eternal Salvation of Mankind had depended upon the true Belief of it, our LORD Himself and his Disciples, who were taught all Things, and guided into all Truth by the HOLY SPIRIT, *John, ch. xiv. ver. 26*, would, in the most plain and positive Terms, and in the most forcible Expressions, have often and publickly proclaim'd it. Or will the *Athanasian* affirm, that the same Faith which was sufficient to bring Men to Heaven in the Days of the Apostles is not sufficient now? Can it be supposed, that the great GOD would ever suffer a Truth of that momentous Nature to be left under any Obscurity? Or will You dare to say, it was not in his Power to make a plainer Revelation concerning it, than what he hath been pleased

pleased to make? With what Indignity doth an *Athanasian* treat our blessed SAVIOUR! He supposes that His Doctrine in Matters of the highest Consequence, even where the Everlasting Salvation of all Mankind is concerned, wants to be explained and illustrated by an obscure Monk!

DOCTOR *Waterland*, in his Importance of the Trinity, p. 167, hath quoted a beautiful Passage out of *Salvian*, which I shall beg Leave to transcribe: “ They are Hereticks
 “ but do not know that they are so;
 “ they are Hereticks in our Judgment,
 “ not so in their own, for they esteem themselves such good Catholics, that they even throw upon
 “ us the infamous Charge of Heresy:
 “ Such therefore as they are to us,
 “ we are to them: We know assuredly that they are injurious to the
 “ Divine Generation of the SON in
 “ making Him inferior to the FATHER: They on the other Hand
 “ think

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“ think us injurious to the FATHER
“ in believing Them both Equal:
“ Truth is on our Side, yet they
“ think it on theirs, though they
“ have not the right Faith, yet they
“ think they have.” How they shall
be punished at the Day of Judgment
for this their Error of false Persuasion,
no one can know except, the Judge.

4. IF neither our SAVIOUR Himself, nor yet his Disciples had thought proper to draw up a Creed for our Instruction, yet if the Church Article of the TRINITY had been so absolutely necessary to Salvation, most assuredly the blessed JESUS would never have made use of any Expressions, whose natural Sense might induce us to doubt even of that Article itself; and yet we find him telling the Jews, *John, ch. v. ver. 19, 20, Verily, verily, I say unto You, the SON can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do: For, what Things soever He doth, these also doth the SON*
E *likewise;*

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likewise; for, the Father loveth the SON and sheweth Him all Things that Himself doth: And, ver. 26, 27, For as the Father hath Life in Himself, even so hath He given to the SON to have Life to Himself, and hath given Him Authority to execute Judgment also: And, ver. 30, I can of my own self do nothing, as I hear I judge, and my Judgment is just, because I seek not my own Will, but the Will of my Father which hath sent me. So, Mark, ch. xiii. ver. 32, Speaking of the general Judgment: But of that Day, and that Hour knoweth no Man, no, not the Angels, which are in Heaven, neither the SON, but the FATHER, Also, John, ch. xiv. ver. 28, After speaking to his Disciples of his Ascension; If you loved Me you would rejoice, because I said I go to my FATHER, for my FATHER is greater than I. From such Expressions as these, may we not be allowed to doubt of a Co-equal and Co-eternal TRINITY, and to believe with St. Paul, 1 Col. ch. i. ver. 15, That
JESUS

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JESUS CHRIST is the Image of the invisible GOD, the First-born of every Creature; and if it be not a Sin to doubt of the Truth of the Article it self, can it be a Sin to doubt of the several Explications thereof, which are set forth in the *Athanasian Creed*? Can it be such a Sin as to exclude us from all Hopes of being saved? Must we, for believing our SAVIOUR'S OWN Words, that his FATHER is greater, than Him, perish everlastingly? Had the eternal Salvation of Mankind depended upon their believing aright; had an erroneous Faith been attended with that dreadful Consequence; it will be difficult to reconcile these Expressions of our SAVIOUR with the gracious Intent of his Coming; had this really been the Case I can't persuade my self, that the blessed JESUS would ever have made use of Parables or figurative Expressions; had it been above all Things necessary to believe rightly the Catholick Faith, that Faith had been as evident, as the Obligations

of moral Good and Evil, and we might as well have confounded universal Benevolence with Murder, as puzzled ourselves about Orthodoxy and Heresy.

IN the Course of this Inquiry, I have industriously avoided using the Word Reason, that I might give no Offence to my Brethren, the *Athanasians*; for, there is Nothing shocks an *Athanasian* so much, as talking of human Reason: He starts at the very Sound, and musters up all his Forces to conjure down the evil Spirit; and yet it is certain, whether he will acknowledge it or not, that we derive both Reason and Revelation from the same Divine Fountain: God is the Author of both. He, by whose Inspiration the Scriptures were written, to Him we are indebted for our Reason: Even Christianity itself is founded upon the due Use of our Reason; for, if Reason must be entirely excluded, Why am I bound to embrace the Christian

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Christian Religion, rather than Mahometanism, or any other? You say, because Christianity is revealed by God, and the Other is an Imposture; but how shall I know That, except by having Recourse to my Reason, and examining the Strength of the Evidence upon which it is founded? 'Tis by our Reason, that we are qualified to adore the great Author of the Universe: So the ALMIGHTY, in Scripture, frequently appeals to the Reason of Mankind; therefore though it may pass for a Sally of Zeal, 'tis mere Enthusiasm to build Revelation on the Ruins of Reason, and is the greatest Affront, that can be offered to Christianity to suppose, that it contains any Thing, which can't bear the Test of Reason; because such a Persuasion places it upon a Level with Impostures and false Religions. But not to engage further in this Dispute, since it appears by the aforesaid Texts, that the *Athanasian Creed* is seemingly inconsistent both with Revelation and Reason,

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Reason, it will be incumbent for the Teachers of the *Athanasian* Doctrine, not only to debar us of the Use of Reason, but, with their Brethren on the other Side of the Water, to lock up the Scripture too.

BUT admitting these, and many such like Texts of Scripture, are capable of a different Construction; admitting that learned Metaphysicians can, by their Subtleties, confound our Understandings, and prove *greater* and *equal* to signify the same; or that it is no Contradiction to assert, that the Effect may be Co-eternal and Co-equal with the Cause, yet since the Fate of all Mankind is by this Creed supposed to depend on the true Faith, the true Faith ought to be intelligible to all. The contrary Supposition reflects on the Justice of the ALMIGHTY, and bears very hard on the Character of our SAVIOUR, as if the Rule he hath given us in Matters of the highest Importance is so obscure, that none
but

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but very learned Men can understand his Meaning, and wanted further Explanation. And is not this the impious Language of the *Atbanasian*? God made his Work for Man to mend! Is not this the Language of this Author? whose only Argument for the retaining this Creed is, because neither the Scripture itself, nor the Apostles, nor yet the *Nicene Creed* are sufficient to preserve us from Heresy. p. 120, &c. “ This Creed alone, he
 “ says, is the only sure Guard of the
 “ fundamental Articles of Christianity;
 “ and as to the damning Clauses, he
 “ asserts, that they are declaratory of
 “ Scripture, and that they are the
 “ Words of our LORD Himself.” *Mark,*
ch. xvi. ver. 16. He that believeth not
shall be damned, which being a Text of dreadful Sound, it deserves our most serious Attention. Therefore I intreat your Patience whilst I endeavour to explain the true Meaning of this Passage of Scripture.

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If the Reader will turn his Eyes to this Chapter of St. *Mark*, he will find it thus written:

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the World and preach the Gospel to every Creature; he that Believeth and is Baptized shall be Saved; and he that Believeth not shall be Damned; and these Signs shall follow them that Believe: In my Name shall they cast out Devils, they shall speak with new Tongues, they shall take up Serpents, and if they Drink any deadly Thing it shall not hurt them, they shall lay Hands on the Sick, and they shall recover.

WHEN we have once imbibed an Opinion, we are apt to Treasure up in our Memories every Incident which serves to confirm it, and to reject whatever makes against it: From hence it becomes so exceeding difficult to lay aside a favourite Opinion, though never so erroneous. This is most evident in Disputes
amongst

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amongst Christians. How is this Sense of Scripture strain'd and perverted to serve their several Purposes? Thus, this Author may as easily prove from this Passage of Scripture, that all Persons, who are now living shall be damned, as those whom he is pleased to call Hereticks; for the Words are very exprefs, and without any Exception: *He that believeth not shall be damned*; and these Signs shall follow them that believe, in my Name, *they shall cast out Devils, they shall speak with new Tongues, they shall take up Serpents, and if they Drink any deadly Thing it shall not hurt them, they shall lay Hands on the Sick and they shall recover*. Thus we see what mighty Power shall attend on those who believe, and on the other hand, if all must be damned who can't cast out Devils, heal the Sick, and do other such mighty Works; Who then can be saved? Was it for this, that JESUS CHRIST died on the Cross? Was this his last Legacy to

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Mankind?

Mankind? For, we read, that having so said, *He ascended into Heaven.* What are become of those affectionate Terms of SAVIOUR, and REDEEMER, and MEDIATOR between GOD and Man? I humbly hope, this can never be the Fate of all Mankind; and persuade myself, that whatever be the Meaning of this Passage of Scripture, it can't be, that all who are not favoured with a Power of working Miracles shall be doom'd to eternal Damnation.

IN the next Place I hope to make it appear, that these Words, *He that believeth not shall be Damned*, are not only agreeable with the exact Rules of Justice, but proceed from great Goodness; and for which we ought to be extremely thankful; though if I should fail in proving these Points to the Satisfaction of unprejudiced Persons, it will not from thence follow, that all who doubt of the *Athanasian Creed* are Damned; for, tho'
I should

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I should appear to be in the Wrong, in my Interpretation of them, it is not a Consequence, that therefore this Author is in the Right in his, since the Error may be various.

AND he said unto them, Go ye into all the World and preach the Gospel unto every Creature. Gospel is a Word of *Saxon* Original, the *Greek* Word is *εὐαγγέλιον* which imports good News or good Tidings, and hence, those who have wrote the History of the Birth, Life, Actions Precepts, Promises, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of JESUS CHRIST are called Evangelists, as being Authors of good Tidings of great Joy to all Christians. The Gospel is indeed a good Word in the highest and most comfortable Sense, containing good Tidings of great Joy to all devout and pious Christians, even an eternal Life of Happiness in Heaven, through the Merits of JESUS CHRIST our SA-

VIOUR and REDEEMER. This Commission, this Command did our LORD and SAVIOUR enjoin his Disciples just before his Ascension into Heaven, and lest there should be in any of them an evil Heart of Unbelief, he added the following Words; *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.*

THE Apostles themselves were so strongly prejudiced in Favour of that general Opinion of the *Jews*, that the promis'd *Messiah* was to be a mighty Temporal Prince, who should deliver them from the *Roman* Power, and out of the Hands of all their Enemies, and restore the Kingdom unto *Israel*; that they could not relish our SAVIOUR's own Discourses of his Sufferings and Death. *Matt. ch. xvi. v. 21, 22, From that time forth began JESUS to shew unto his Disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the Elders*

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Elders, and Chief Priests and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third Day. Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him; saying: Be it far from Thee, LORD; This shall not happen to Thee. A crucified Messiah was a stumbling Block to them as well as to the rest of the Jews. And when these Things were actually accomplished; when they saw him hanging upon the Cross, his Hands and Feet nailed thereto; when they heard him groan; and when they saw him expire, no Wonder then that their Hearts fail'd them. Thus we find two of them talking together about what had just happen'd. Luke, ch. xxiv. v. 15, &c. And it came to pass that while they communed together and reasoned, JESUS CHRIST drew near, and went with them, but their Eyes were holden, so that they did not know him; and he said unto them; what manner of Communications are these, that you have one to another, as ye walk and are sad?
And

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And one of them, whose Name was Cleopas, said unto him; art thou only a Stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the Things, which are come to pass there in these Days? And he said unto them, what Things? And they said unto him, concerning JESUS of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in Deed and Word before GOD and all the People; and how the Chief Priests and our Rulers delivered Him to be condemned to Death, and have crucified him; but we trusted, that it had been He, who should have redeemed Israel.

MANY other Passages of Scripture might be produc'd to prove this Diffidency even of the Apostles themselves. Permit me to mention one more: Our SAVIOUR had at diverse Times shewn himself to his Disciples after his Crucifixion: But more remarkably, at one Time, when they were all assembled together, JESUS stood in the midst of them, and
said

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said unto them, *Peace be unto ye:*
 But they were terrified and affright-
 ed, and suppos'd they had seen a
 Spirit: And he said unto them,
Why are you troubled, and why do
Thoughts arise in your Hearts? Behold
my Hands and my Feet, that it is I
Myself, handle me and see, for, a
Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones as you
see me have; and at length he con-
 vinced them, that it was He himself.
 But as St. John tells us, *ch. xx. v. 24,*
Thomas one of the Twelve was not
with them when JESUS came: The
 other Disciples therefore said unto Tho-
 mas, *we have seen the LORD;* but
 he said unto them, *except I shall see*
in his Hands the Print of the Nails,
and put my Finger into the Print of
the Nails, and thrust my Hand into
his Side, I will not believe: And af-
 ter eight Days the Disciples being a-
 gain assembled, and Thomas with them,
 came JESUS and stood in the midst,
 and said *Peacc be unto you;* then said
 He unto Thomas *reach kithier thy Fin-*
ger

ger and behold my Hands, and reach hither thy Hand and thrust it into my Side and be not faithless, but believing; and Thomas answered and said unto him, my LORD and my GOD: JESUS saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed, blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

THIS Diffidence of the Apostles to believe our SAVIOUR'S Resurrection is a very forcible Argument for the Proof of that grand Article of our Christian Faith; but to fix their Attention in the strongest Manner, and lest the Witnesses, or any of them, should (out of Fear of Persecution) after his Ascension into Heaven, and when the Evidence of Sense could no longer be had, presume to disown or deny it, which would have invalidated the Testimony of the other Witnesses, and given the Enemies of our Holy Religion a great Advantage, Our gracious LORD was pleased to intermix

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intermix Threatnings with his Promises. *Mark, ch. xvi. ver. 15, &c.* He upbraided them with their Unbelief and Hardness of Heart, because they believed not them, which had seen him after he was risen: And he said unto them, Go ye into all the World and preach the Gospel to every Creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned: But then to encourage them in their Duty, and that they might not be deterred by the Terrors of the World, He gives them this comfortable Assurance: *These Signs shall follow Them that believe; in my Name they shall cast out Devils, they shall speak with new Tongues, they shall take up Serpents, and if they drink any deadly Thing it shall not hurt them, they shall lay Hands on the Sick and they shall recover.*

INDEED, if we consider the severe Persecutions, cruel Crucifixions and Deaths in Variety of Shapes, which
G attended

attended the Promulgation of the Gospel, we must wonder how Flesh and Blood was able to support it self! Read *St. Paul's Account* of his Sufferings, some Time before his last Trial, *2 Cor. ch. xi. ver. 24, Of the Jews five Times received I forty Stripes save one, thrice was I beaten with Rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered Shipwreck, a Night and a Day have I been in the Deep, in Journeying often, in Perils of Water, in Perils by my own Countrymen, in Perils by the Heathen, in Perils in the City, in Perils in the Wilderness, in Perils in the Sea, in Perils amongst false Brethren, in Weariness and Painfulness, in Watchings often, in Hunger and Thirst, in Fastings often, in Cold and Nakedness; and besides those Things which are without, that which comes upon me daily, the Care of the Churches. Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not?*

It was of the utmost Consequence to Christianity, that every one of the
Witneses

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Witnesses should, if call'd upon, attest the Truth thereof with their Blood. Had they pleaded human Infirmities, drawn-back at the Sight of Death, and, to save their own Lives, denied the Resurrection, with what a plausible Objection would this have furnish'd the *Deist*? Then, instead of charging the Christian Religion with harsh and unintelligible Doctrines, it had been a more specious Pretence, that some of them denied that main Article of Christianity, when they were examined before the Council, and said his Disciples came, by Night, and stole away his Body, whilst the Guard was asleep. Permit me, therefore, to say it was great Goodness to us, who live in these distant Ages, that the Truth of the Resurrection was thus strongly guarded; and as to the Witnesses themselves, they were highly favour'd; their Eyes and Senses were blessed with the Presence and Miracles of the great *Messiah*; and 'tis both the Christian Doctrine, and highly agreeable to Justice,

stice, *that to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.* St. Paul, 'tis true, was a Stranger to the Person of our SAVIOUR, when upon Earth, and therefore the Method taken for the Conversion of that Chosen Vessel was most miraculous. To the rest of the Disciples the Appearance of our SAVIOUR, after his Resurrection, was exactly the same as before his Crucifixion, when he lived amongst them, even that of their old Master and Friend, only bearing in his Feet and Hands the Prints of the Nails, and the Gash made in his Body by the Spear. Had his Appearance been with Splendor and Glory, the Disciples would not have been persuaded that it was the same JESUS they had so often convers'd with, but would have thought they saw an Apparition. On the other Hand, St. Paul was never acquainted with the meek and innocent JESUS. That young Man was brought up in the strict Sect of the Pharisees, and was so very
zealous

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zealous towards the Law of the *Jews*, that he persecuted the Christians even to Death. When, as he was traveling to *Damascus* with a Commission from the High Priest to bring all such, as he found there, who call'd upon the Name of *JESUS*, bound to *Jerusalem*; On a Sudden there appeared in the Heavens a great Light, above the Brightness of the Sun at Noon-day, shining round him, and a Voice came from Heaven, saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? To which Saul answered, *Who art Thou LORD?* And the Voice said, *I am JESUS of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.* Saul was struck blind with the Glory of that Light, and continued in total Darkness for three Days, and was then restored to his Sight by Miracle, Scales falling from his Eyes upon the Prayers of the devout *Ananias*. This wonderful Appearance must mightily strengthen the Faith of all the Disciples, they being hereby well assured, that the *LORD JESUS*, whom they saw crucified,

cified, was not only risen from the Dead, but exalted high in the Heavens.

HAD our LORD's Disciples still doubted; How great had been their Infidelity! *Woe unto thee Chorazin, Woe unto thee Bethsaida; for if the mighty Works, which were done in thee, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in Sackcloth and Ashes: But I say unto You, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment, than for You. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted up to Heaven, shall be brought down to Hell; for if the mighty Works, which were done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this Day: But I say unto You, it shall be more tolerable for the Land of Sodom at the Day of Judgment, than for You.* But the Disciples of our LORD were favour'd with a more convincing Reason for their Faith in CHRIST, and steady Adherence therein,

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in, than even all this, *viz.* They had themselves a Power of working Miracles. *These Signs shall follow those that believe, in my Name shall they cast out Devils, &c.* Therefore only to those select Ages of Christianity, when the Power of working Miracles continued, are, I humbly presume, these threatening Words strictly applicable.

BUT if notwithstanding what hath been said, it should still be insisted on, that these Words, *He that believeth not shall be damned*, must be extended to all Persons, in all Ages of the World, even in their most severe and strict Sense, yet they will by no Means support the Damning Clauses of the *Athanasian Creed*.

IN interpreting the Scriptures we ought to observe the same Rule as is practised in the Interpretation of all Writings, *viz.* to read the whole Book throughout, at least as much as any Ways relate to the Passage in Dispute;
to

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to consider the general Scope and Design of the Author, and to make an Allowance for the Language, Nation, Age, &c. when wrote.

IT is of the most dangerous Consequence to build Doctrines upon single Texts and Scraps of Scripture, and to interpret them in such a Sense as to efface that Light of Reason, which it hath pleased the ALMIGHTY to bestow upon us, and to eradicate the Notions of Good and Evil, and even to derogate from the unlimited Goodness of Our Great CREATOR.

THIS Author therefore, to prove this Text of Scripture to be any Authority in the present Question, ought to shew that the chief Design of the Writers of the *New Testament* was to establish the *Athanasian* Doctrine; at least, that the precedent Discourse related to it; but when it appears to be the very Reverse; when the *Athanasian* Creed was not composed till some
Hundreds

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Hundreds of Years after the Death of Our SAVIOUR, nor the Doctrines summed up therein known in the Church, till a vast Number of Years after, and when the precedent Discourse related to our SAVIOUR's Resurrection, and what He blamed his Disciples for, was their great Infidelity in not believing Those, who had seen him after He was risen. Since this appears to be the Case, then to cite this Text to prove the *Athanasian Creed*, is as foreign to the Purpose, as to cite it to prove the Infallibility of the *Pope*. But the Truth of this Matter is, Men first advance a Doctrine, and then torture Scripture for Texts to support it.

THOUGH it must be acknowledged, that notwithstanding our Author's Assertion, p. 56, relating to the damning Clauses being founded on those Words of our SAVIOUR; yet, p. 12, his Expression is not so harsh; and he there argues thus:
“ It is not repugnant to the Word
H “ of

“ of GOD, that Men shall be eter-
“ nally punished for Unbelief in
“ General, for rejecting the true and
“ right Faith, as taught in Scripture.
“ This surely can never be affirmed,
“ when we hear our LORD Himself
“ pronouncing, that *he that believeth*
“ *not shall be Damned.* It is plainly
“ then agreeable to Scripture, that
“ he who rejects the true Faith in
“ General, shall be punished here-
“ after. And, as a learned Author,
“ (Doctor *Waterland*) writes, as to
“ rejecting any Particular Branch or
“ Article of it, it must of Conse-
“ quence be a Sin against the Whole,
“ against Peace and Truth, and
“ therefore damnable in its own
“ Nature, which is as much as to
“ say, it is as damnable a Sin to
“ doubt, whether CHRIST ever de-
“ scended into Hell, because it is
“ a particular Article in the *Creed*,
“ called the *Apostles Creed*, as it is to
“ deny, that CHRIST JESUS is the
“ Son of GOD, tho’ CHRIST Him-
“ self

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“ self, when hanging on the Cross, assured the Penitent Thief that, That
“ *Day he should be with Him in Paradise.*” I am concern’d a learned Christian should strain Texts of Scripture in this manner, for the Sake of condemning his Brethren, and intreat him carefully to peruse the 14th Chapter of the *Romans*, and to remember the Words of our SAVIOUR, *Judge not that you be not judged; condemn not, and you shall not be condemned; with the same Measure as ye mete withall, it shall be measured to you again.*

BUT I must also admit, that this Author doth not insist upon our believing every Thing, that is contained in the *Athanasian Creed*, on Pain of Damnation; but says, “ That if we
“ believe the main Articles of the
“ TRINITY, and the INCARNATION, it
“ is sufficient; and that no Stress is to be laid upon the several Explications thereof summ’d up in that *Creed*,
p. 53. And he says farther, that the

Learned and Judicious Doctor *Waterland* is of the same Opinion. To which, I will only make this short Remark, That since the *Athanasian Creed* requires our Belief of the Whole, as necessary to Salvation, for the *Creed* begins thus, *Whosoever will be saved, before all Things it is necessary, that he hold the Catholick Faith, which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled without Doubt he shall perish Everlastingly.* And then after particularly reciting the several Articles; it concludes; *This is the Catholick Faith, which except a Man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.* Whosoever is of Opinion, that a Belief of the Whole is not necessary to Salvation, but that if a Man believes the main Articles of the TRINITY and Incarnation, he may be saved without believing all the Explications given us in that *Creed*, such Person doth not himself believe the *Athanasian Creed*: For, since it is evident, that the Whole is more than the Part, if one thinks a Belief of Part sufficient, and
the

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the other asserts, that a Belief of the Whole is necessary, these Two Things are Inconsistent with one another; and then, if the *Athanasian Creed* be the *Touch-Stone* of Heresy, such Person is an Heretick.

I ALSO admit, that this learned Author, to solve all Difficulties about the *Damning Clauses*, tells us “ That “ they are not to be understood in a “ strict Sense,” p. 13, but that great “ Allowances will be made for the Weak- “ nefs, Ignorance or Prejudices of “ Mankind;” And I must confess, that if understood in this Sense, there is an End of the whole Dispute. This Explanation indeed, softens those Clauses with a Witness, for it explains them quite away: Even an *Arian* or an *Infidel* may subscribe with such a *Salvo*; for, he hath his Prejudices against the Articles of the Creed. In short, by such a Construction, this great Bulwark of Christianity opens the Door to all Sorts of Infidels and Hypocrites, and

and excludes only honest Men, who think themselves obliged to understand *Creeds* in their plain obvious Sense and Meaning, without mental Evasions and Jesuitical Equivocations. Also, my Author, p. 206, forgetting his former Allowances for the Prejudices and Weakness of Mankind, wishes some such Clause as this was added:

“ And I do make this Subscription
 “ according to the plain Sense and Un-
 “ derstanding of the Words, and *known*
 “ *Intention of the Imposers.*”

BUT the Argument upon which this Author lays the greatest Stress for the Necessity of retaining the *Athanasian Creed*, is, that this Creed, he says, “ is
 “ the great *Guard* and *Bulwark* of the
 “ Christian Faith. p. 2, &c.” But can a *Deist* or *Infidel* say any Thing more injurious to our holy Profession, viz. That it owes its whole Support to *Creeds* and human Authority; that it cannot be defended on the Principles of Truth and Reason; that its heavenly Doctrine

and

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and the many Miracles wrought in Confirmation of our Faith in CHRIST, and which are attested by the strongest Evidence, are not sufficient, though our SAVIOUR himself frequently appeals to the Miracles He wrought, as a Proof of his divine Mission; but that it is owing to the Imposition of *Creeds*, that there is such a Thing as Christianity in the World; that if human Authority did not interpose, and the *Clergy* were not enjoined, under the Penalty of losing their Preferments, to subscribe to the *Athanasian Creed*, the Name of Christian had not now been heard of. For my own Part, I always thought the Holy Scripture was the Pillar of our Faith, and Truth and Reason its Guard; and I do thoroughly dissent from this Author's Assertion, and from my Heart believe, no one Person was ever converted or confirmed in Christianity by reading the *Athanasian Creed*, or even the laborious Works of all the learned Commentators who have perplexed themselves

on

on this Question, let him study as long as he please, what is to be understood by *Essences, Substances, Subsistences, Co-essentialities, Persons, Personalities, Vitalities*, the *Hypostatical Union*, the *Difference* between *Filiation, Spiration, Procession*, the learned Disputes about *Filioque*, and other famous *Points*, which have divided and distracted the Church; and I much doubt, whether at the End of his long Enquiry, he will be either a better Christian or a wiser Man; these Sorts of Studies may indeed bewilder Mankind, and lead us into a Maze, but can convey to the Understanding no real, useful Knowledge. Our *Athanasians*, like the *Babel Builders* of Old, instead of climbing up into Heaven, have only lost themselves in a Confusion of Language.

FROM a Treatise, whose professed Design was to prove the *Athanasian Creed a Preservative against Heresies*, we had reason to hope the learned Author would have explained to us
the

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the Nature of Heresies, that Mankind might have avoided so dangerous a Rock: But all the Satisfaction he is pleased to afford us herein, is, that *Arians, Macedonians, Appollinarians, Photinians, Eutychians, Eunomians, Manichees, Socinians, Antitrinitarians, Valentinians, Samosatarians, Marcyons, Nestorians, Sabellians, Novatians, Patripassians, Anthropomorphites* and such like, are Hereticks; and in Opposition to their damnable Doctrines, he tells us this *Creed* was composed: “ And to
“ guard the true Faith against their
“ heretical and pernicious Tenets, it
“ is necessary it should be retained.
“ By this, he says, they are kept from
“ plundering us of the Articles of
“ our Faith. No wonder to hear
“ perverse *Arians, Photinians* and
“ *Apollinarians* crying out against those
“ Guards, which are our Defence a-
“ gainst all their false Glosses and Mis-
“ constructions. These Men feel the
“ Force and Strength of this great
“ Bulwark of our Faith, and by their
I “ disliking

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“ disliking it shew us how wisely it is
 “ compos’d and fitted to oppose their
 “ Heretical Tenets. Their condemn-
 “ ing it, is its greatest Commendation,
 “ and their pleading to have it laid
 “ aside is a very substantial Reason for
 “ us to retain it.” p. 29.

IN those Ages of the World, when
 the *Athanasian Creed* was compos’d and
 gain’d Ground in the Church; and
 even in all Ages, there are great Num-
 bers, who pay an implicit Regard to
 Words; Men, who have Ears to hear,
 but seem to want Understanding to
 judge. To these the Writers and Main-
 tainers of all Controversial Points,
 make their Application not by Reason
 and Argument, but by appealing to
 their Passions, and by loading their
 Adversaries Characters with all that is
 bad, and calling them by hard and
 opprobrious Names; and it is wonderful
 to observe, how it hath work’d up
 these Mens Passions, intoxicating them
 even to Madness. Who can describe
 the

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the Confusion and Disorder! The many bloody Murders and inhuman Massacres, which have been owing to the unjust Charge of Heresie! This single Word *Heretick* hath filled the Courts of the Inquisition, brought vast Numbers of poor, innocent Persons to the Stake, and even stripp'd Emperors and Kings of their Thrones, and overwhelm'd whole Countries with intestine Commotions and unnatural Wars, the Inhabitants thereof sheathing their Swords in each others Bowels; and all this, for no other Reason, but because they believed them to be *Hereticks*, that is, because their Leading Priests, to whom they had submitted their Consciences, said they were *Hereticks*.

SINCE therefore this Author leaves us entirely in the Dark, as to the Meaning of the Word *Heresy*, or *Heretick*, I will take the Liberty to give you my Opinion about it. *Heresy* doth not proceed from a Weakness in the Understanding, but from a Depravity of the Will

Will. He is not a *Heretick*, who through Ignorance happens to be mistaken in the true Faith; but he is an *Heretick*, who knowingly espouses an Opinion, which he himself does not believe to be true, or who, out of self Interest, or any other Sinister Design, maintains any Doctrine to be a necessary Article of *Faith*, when he doth not, in his own Opinion, believe it to be necessary, intending thereby to make himself the Head of a Party and highly magnified for his Zeal and Orthodoxy. St. *Paul* in his Epistle to *Titus*, *ch. iii. ver. 11*, Speaking of *Hereticks*, says they are self-condemned; which can't be applyed to them, who think themselves in the Right, but must necessarily be applyed to them, who act against the Dictates of their own Consciences.

THUS have I offer'd my Mite towards freeing *Christianity* from the unjust Clamours its Adversaries have raised against it, on the Account of
this

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this *Creed*; and hope what I have written may engage some abler Heads to take it into their serious Consideration. The more of Reason appears in our Religion, the more evident are the Marks of its Divine Original; and, on the other Hand, whatever will not bear the Test of Reason, can't be the Religion of Rational Beings: Therefore, what greater Service can any One do the Christian Religion, than to prove, that all its Doctrines are Rational, Just and Good, *That its Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all its Paths are Peace*: And then I should humbly hope, that the Legislature would be pleased to dispence with the present Subscription to this *Creed*. If the *Athanasian Creed* doth indeed reflect upon the Justice and Goodness of the ALMIGHTY, and represents our most gracious GOD under most frightful Colours, acting as a cruel, arbitrary Tyrant, and damning to eternal Torments infinite Numbers of poor Wretches for not believing certain Articles of *Faith*, which
are

are not in their Power to believe, because they are seemingly contradictory to one another, and also very difficult rightly to be understood, and consequently no Object of their *Faith*; for, 'tis not the repeating a Set of Words, and supposing, that they should operate as a Charm to bring us to Heaven, but 'tis understanding and assenting to the Proposition contained in such Words, which constitutes *Faith* or *Belief*. If this be really the Case of the *Athanasian Creed*, if the most perfect and amiable of BEINGS is therein represented as void of Mercy and Goodness, is it not a most melancholy Consideration, that the Reverend and Learned Body of the *Clergy* are obliged by *Law* to subscribe their *Belief* in it? Is it not a great Grief to the sincere Christian to have so much Blasphemy appointed to be read in the Church on our most Solemn Feast-Days? Perhaps, the Necessity the *Clergy* are under will be pleaded in their Excuse; and it may be argued,
that

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that theirs is the greater Sin, who impose it; but this must be submitted to those noble Assemblies, in whose Hands is lodged the Legislative Power of this Nation, by whose most pious and gracious Endeavours, I humbly hope, Posterity, and the Children yet unborn, may gratefully remember their happy Deliverance from this, worse than *Ægyptian* Slavery, because it puts Fetters on the Conscience; and that the *Clergy* in future Ages may not be obliged, like their *Fore-Fathers* to subscribe to what is repugnant to *Scripture*, and then be forced to rely on some Jesuitical Evasion, or other secret Reservation, as a *Salvo* for their Consciences.

SOME, perhaps, may be surprized how a Spurious *Creed*, composed many Years after the Death of *Athanasius*, never heard of, till four hundred or five hundred, or perhaps six hundred Years, after our Saviour's Death, (for, the Learned differ widely both as to its Author, and the Time when composed

posed) came first to be introduced into the Church: But when we consider those dark Ages of the World when the *Hunns, Goths, Vandals*, and other barbarous Nations had laid Waste the *Roman* Provinces; when Superstition like thick Darknes had overspread the Face of the Earth, and extinguished the Light of Reason; when the Word of GOD was locked up in an unknown Tongue; and when instead of searching the Scriptures, as our SAVIOUR commanded, it was forbid; when Adoration of Saints, or rather painted Images, superseded that of the ALMIGHTY; when Murder and Persecution were sanctified by Authority; when destroying our Brethren, the Work of his Hands, was construed doing GOD good Service; when *Makometanism* over-ran the East, and *Papery* the West; when *Credo, quia impossibile est*, joined with a large Donation to the Church, was the highest Degree of Merit, attoned for Murder, and taught the deluded Wretches to
 imagine

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imagine themselves secure of a Place in Heaven, whatsoever Crimes they had, or should commit. Since such Doctrines and such Practices have prevailed in the Church, I am not startled to find the *Athanasian Creed* amongst them.

NEITHER, perhaps, shall we be much surprized to find it still continue a Part of the *Common Prayer*, when we consider, that the Reverend Body of the Clergy are bound down by Subscriptions outwardly to profess to believe it. This *Creed*, is indeed, in a literal Sense the great *Bulwark*, which guards the Possessions of the Church: This they must break through, or swallow down, before they can accept any Preferments there; and if such a Person should afterwards write against it, how would he be persecuted by his false Brethren, who impose *Creeds*, thereby to wound and affright tender Consciences, that so they might ingross all the Revenues and Honours of the Church? How would they traduce his

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Character? How would he be upbraided for his former Subscriptions? (Vide this Author, p. 18.) *Omnibus hisce Articulis & singulis in eisdem contentis, Volens & ex animo subscribo, & Consensum meum eisdem præbeo*, would be the Weapon made use of to defame him with: And as to the Laity, too many of them trouble themselves very little about Religion, and some perhaps may be induced to entertain an harder Thought of *Christianity* itself, from a mistaken Opinion, as if this *Creed* was really a Part of the Christian Religion, and that it enjoined a slavish Submission to the Dictates of designing Men; and, instead of a reasonable Service, required us to renounce our Understandings, to apostatize from Humanity, and degenerate into Brutes, by giving up our Reason, which alone distinguishes us from them. Most unjust Charge upon our Holy Religion! A Religion, which enlarges our rational Faculties, filling the Mind with an astonishing Idea of an eternal Duration,

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ration, and thereby giving us a Contempt of the mean, tranſient Pleaſures of this Life, and which we, and the Brutes enjoy in common; or if there is any Difference the Advantage is theirs. Chriſtianity affords us a moſt amazing Inſtance of the Goodneſs of GOD towards the Sons of Men, and requires, on our Part, the higheſt Degree of Reverence towards the Moſt HIGH, the moſt refined Purity of Heart and Mind, and the moſt noble and diffuſive Charity to all Mankind; even its Articles of Belief tend to this one great End, to eſtabliſh Righteouſneſs upon Earth, and entire Obedience to the Will of GOD. What can give us a deeper Senſe of the heinous Nature of Sin, and of the indiſpenſable Neceſſity to obey the Laws of GOD, than reflecting upon the Dignity of the Perſon, who gave Himſelf to be a Sacrifice for the Sins of Men? So when we are perſwaded, that it is the Son of GOD, who hath aſſured us, that everlaſting Happineſs, or
endleſs

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endless Punishment will be the Consequence of our good or bad Actions here; Who can doubt of the Truth of it? The Pleasures attending *Christianity* are sincere, durable, improve upon Reflection, and being seated in the Mind, continue after the Body is broken and decayed; even Sickness and Pain itself, which entirely destroys all Relish for sensual Pleasures, are considered by the Christian, as quickening his Journey to his peaceful and eternal Home.

F I N I S.

